

1.7 Policy basis

Current local, state and federal policies offer strong support for making improvements to bicycle transportation facilities in jurisdictions throughout the Metro area.

Making investments to improve Edina's bicycle transportation network is consistent with policies and positions from local, state and federal planning and transportation agencies and bodies.

A brief list is included in this chapter.

CITY OF EDINA COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

The 2008 City of Edina Comprehensive Plan (currently under development) responds to ten objectives that provide a broad statement of the values and directions for shaping change in Edina. Three of those objectives are directly addressed by an improved bicycle transportation network in Edina:

Objective 4

“Develop and maintain a coordinated and balanced transportation system that provides a variety of choices among transportation modes.”

Objective 9

“Improve community health and fitness.”

Objective 10

“Maintain a quality, sustainable environment.”

Please see Appendix A.1 to read the complete list of 2008 Comprehensive Plan objectives.

METROPOLITAN COUNCIL

The Metropolitan Council explicitly supports improvement and provision of bicycle facilities as part of transportation investments in cities within its jurisdiction.

The Council's 2030 Transportation Policy Plan includes several policies that strongly recommend provision of cycling facilities. A brief excerpt is provided here; the full section can be found in Appendix A.2.



On Wooddale Avenue today.

Policy 15

Develop and Maintain Efficient Pedestrian and Bicycle Travel Systems

“Safe, high-quality, continuous, barrier-free pedestrian and bicycle facilities must be developed, maintained and improved to function as an integral part of the region’s transportation system. Compact, mixed-use development with facilities for pedestrians and bicyclists helps reduce short automobile trips. Over the last 10 to 15 years, the region has made an effort to direct a higher level of transportation investments to special facilities for pedestrians and bicyclists, either as freestanding projects or as part of larger transportation projects. As the region promotes the development of mixed-use centers, providing facilities for these non-motorized modes becomes an increasingly important component of planning at the city, county and regional level. As recognized in the federal surface transportation law, well-developed pedestrian and bicycle systems help promote energy conservation, reduce the pressure on the highway system, and preserve the environment. In addition, recent research indicates that residents of places designed with accommodations for bicyclists and pedestrians are more active and therefore healthier than residents of other areas.”

MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

The Minnesota Department of Transportation (Mn/DOT) has in recent years adopted policies that strongly advocate for the provision of adequate facilities for bicyclists.

Mn/DOT’s official vision for the role of bicycle transportation in the state’s overall transportation network states:

“Minnesota is a place where bicycling is a safe and attractive option in every community. Bicycling is accommodated both for daily transportation and for experiencing the natural resources of the state.”

Mn/DOT’s role in making this vision reality is included in its mission statement regarding bicycle transportation:

“Mn/DOT will safely and effectively accommodate and encourage bicycling on its projects in Minnesota communities, plus in other areas where conditions warrant. Mn/DOT will exercise leadership with its partners to achieve similar results on their projects.”

WHAT IS THE METROPOLITAN COUNCIL?

The Metropolitan Council is the regional planning organization serving the Twin Cities seven-county metropolitan area.

The Council provides and manages regional services including public transportation, wastewater treatment, and regional and municipal planning.

It sets up the rules and framework for regional investments in transportation, parks and open space, and other systems, and provides funding for implementing projects meeting regional goals.

Starting in 2008, Mn/DOT will require all new construction projects over which they have jurisdiction to include “safe and effective” bicycle accommodations. Only highway construction projects are excepted from this requirement.

FEDERAL POLICIES

AASHTO GUIDANCE

The American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) is a standards-setting body which publishes specifications and guidelines that guide highway design and construction throughout the United States. Its policies regarding provision of bicycle facilities are strongly supportive:

“All highways, except those where bicyclists are legally prohibited, should be designed and constructed under the assumption they will be used by cyclists. Therefore, bicycles should be considered in all phases of transportation planning, new roadway design, roadway construction and capacity improvement projects, and transit projects.”

FEDERAL AGENCIES

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)’s Non-motorized Design Guidance, governing implementation of the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21) and subsequent authorizations, states:

“Bicycle and pedestrian ways shall be established in all new construction and reconstruction projects in urbanized areas (unless prohibited by law, excessive cost, or demonstrated absence of need).”

FEDERAL LAW

The Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21) authorized the Federal surface transportation programs for highways, highway safety, and transit for the 6-year period between 1998 and 2003. After temporary extensions, the act was reauthorized in 2005 to govern transportation spending until 2010. It states:

“Bicycle transportation facilities and pedestrian walkways shall be considered, where appropriate, in conjunction with all new construction and reconstruction of transportation projects, except where bicycle and pedestrian use are not permitted.”

TEA-21 AND SAFETEA-LU

Many of the recent changes in state and federal transportation policies regarding bicycling facilities are the result of federal legislation governing federal surface transportation investments.

TEA-21 (The Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century) authorized the Federal surface transportation programs for highways, highway safety, and transit for the 6-year period between 1998 and 2003. After temporary extensions, the act was reauthorized as SAFETEA-LU (Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users) in 2005 to govern transportation spending until 2010. It states:

“Bicycle transportation facilities and pedestrian walkways shall be considered, where appropriate, in conjunction with all new construction and reconstruction of transportation projects, except where bicycle and pedestrian use are not permitted.”

The Act further includes seven planning objectives that must be included in regional transportation plans. Four of these are consistent with directing improvements to bicycling facilities and infrastructure:

Objective 2

“Increase the safety and security for the transportation system for motorized and non-motorized users”

Objective 3

“Increase the accessibility and mobility options available to people and for freight”

Objective 4

“Protect and enhance the environment, promote energy conservation and improve the quality of life”

Objective 5

“Enhance the integration of connectivity of the transportation system, across and between modes, for people and freight”