



## Background



*This section provides background information including development patterns, demographic characteristics, and existing plans and policies as they relate to walking and bicycling in Robbinsdale.*

### **In this section**

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## 1.1 - Purpose of this Plan

Robbinsdale residents, staff and elected officials recognize the importance of walking and biking as basic forms of mobility and foundational elements for active living and quality of life in the city. A range of walking and biking assets exist across the city, and residents and visitors alike walk and bike frequently for recreation and transportation means.

The purpose of this plan is to provide practical and action-oriented guidance for the City of Robbinsdale to continue to develop its walking and biking assets into a network that offers safe, comfortable and convenient travel options for people of all ages and abilities, and that invites residents, employees and visitors to walk and bike as part of their daily travel routines to connect to city destinations and amenities.

### Approach

This Plan is based on an Active Living approach that seeks to create conditions that invite more Robbinsdale residents to more often choose to walk or bike to their destinations, to use transit, and to easily include physical activity as part of their daily routines.

### Vision

**“The City of Robbinsdale is a place where walking and biking are safe, comfortable, convenient and inviting everyday activities - a place where people choose to walk or bike to nearby destinations and can easily access the new Bottineau Light Rail Transit line.”**



***Pedestrians walking across West Broadway Avenue in downtown Robbinsdale.***

### What is Active Living?

Active living is a way of life that encourages and includes moderate physical activity - such as walking or biking - as part of a person's daily routine.

Active living is important because it improves physical and mental health, reduces household expenses, improves air quality, builds strong and safe communities, and can help reduce the burden of common chronic conditions like diabetes, asthma, and heart disease.

Policy and design choices can result in built environments that encourage active living. The likelihood of walking to the grocery store, riding a bike to school, or meeting friends in the park depends on the environment in which they are attempted. By making improvements in the city's current infrastructure, policy, and programming approaches Robbinsdale can leverage its existing assets and become a model Active Living community.

## 1.2 - Regional Context

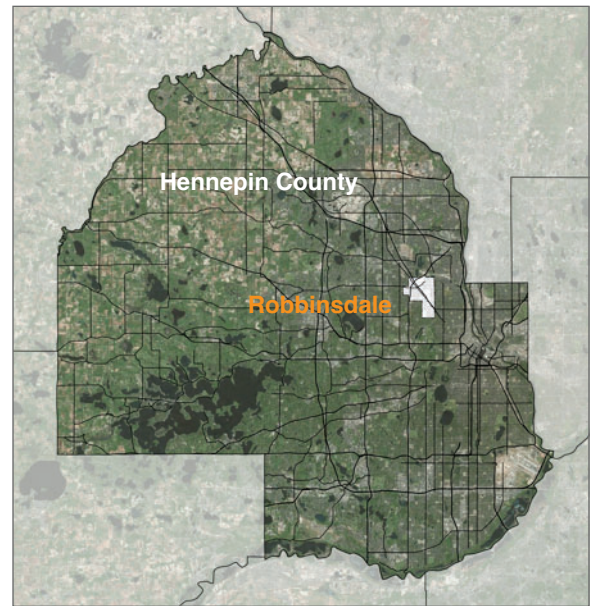
The City of Robbinsdale is a first-ring suburb located northwest of Minneapolis in Hennepin County. The city has a land area of approximately 3 square miles and a population of 13,953, according to 2010 U.S. Census data.

The city is located in central Hennepin County northwest of the City of Minneapolis. Robbinsdale is within close proximity of important regional destinations such as downtown Minneapolis, employment and commercial hubs, and Crystal Airport. The city is well connected to the region’s road network. Minnesota State Highway 100 runs through the city’s northwestern portion, and Hennepin County Road 81 transverses from the northwest corner of Robbinsdale to the southeast corner.

In addition to being home to many residents, Robbinsdale has two large employers: North Memorial Medical Center and the Robbinsdale School System. Over 300 employers and 6,000 employees reside in Robbinsdale, according to the U.S. Census American Fact Finder.

Robbinsdale is well-connected to the regional transit system, and currently served by several Metro Transit bus routes. The future Bottineau LRT Blue Line Extension will provide service from Robbinsdale to Crystal, Brooklyn Park, Golden Valley, and Downtown Minneapolis, and interlink with the existing Blue and Green Lines providing service to Bloomington, MSP International Airport, Mall of America, Union Depot, and Downtown Saint Paul. The existing Robbinsdale Transit Center / Hubbard Marketplace will serve as the Robbinsdale stop for the Bottineau LRT.

Several on-street bicycle facilities in Minneapolis stop at the eastern border of Robbinsdale. An important off-road bicycle connection is the Grand Rounds Scenic Byway trail, which runs along Victory Memorial Parkway on the city’s eastern boundary. This trail provides connections to the Mississippi River, Downtown Minneapolis, and the larger regional bicycle network.



**Robbinsdale’s location (shown in white) within Hennepin County.**



**Robbinsdale is bordered by Crystal on the west, Brooklyn Center on the north, Minneapolis on the east, and Golden Valley on the south.**

## 1.3 - Urban Form and Development Patterns

A city's urban form can support or hinder pedestrian and bicycle trips. Robbinsdale has a well-gridded neighborhood street network with a walkable main street, and also includes several major transportation corridors including Highway 100, County Roads 8, 9, and 81, Burlington Northern Rail and the future LRT Blue line.

### 1.3.1 - Present Land Uses

#### Residential Uses

Residential uses make up about 47% of the total area of Robbinsdale: 43.4% low density residential (single to two-family units), and 3.2% high density (greater than two-family units). Residential neighborhoods are generally separated from other land uses and served by quiet local roads.

#### Commercial and Industrial

Commercial/shopping destinations within Robbinsdale are clustered along County Road 81 (Terrace Center at 36th Avenue, as well as 41st Avenue) and West Broadway Avenue (Old Town near 41st Avenue). After including mixed use and office destinations, these destinations make up just over 4% of the city's land area.

#### Parks and Recreation

Parks, recreation, and open water areas make up over 16% of the city's land area. This includes local destinations such as: Crystal Lake, Grimes Pond, Sochacki Park, Lakeview Terrace Park, and Sanborn Park.

#### Other Land Uses

Remaining land uses in the city include public institutions such as schools and churches, a hospital, road right-of-way, and industrial uses.



*West Broadway Avenue is Robbinsdale's walkable main street lined with shops and cafes.*



*Parks make up about 9% of Robbinsdale's total land area.*

### 1.3.2 - Connectivity

Robbinsdale benefits from a mostly gridded street network that provides residents with a variety of well-connected route options. Most streets include sidewalks. The City is engaged in an ongoing effort to address gaps in the sidewalk network to improve pedestrian connectivity. Several higher-speed, higher-volume roadways in Robbinsdale provide connections for automobiles but are not necessarily inviting or accessible to pedestrians and bicyclists. These roadways include Bottineau Boulevard and U.S. Highway 100, and to a lesser extent North 42nd Avenue North/Lake Drive and North 36th Avenue. A Burlington Northern rail corridor and the future Bottineau LRT line are also located within Robbinsdale.

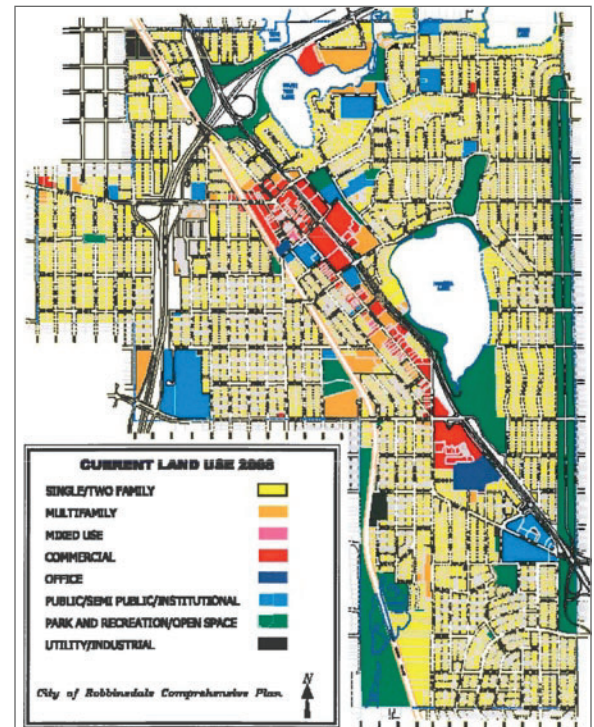
### 1.3.3 - Future Land Use

In the Robbinsdale 2030 Comprehensive Plan, future redevelopment is anticipated for several areas of the city, including downtown Robbinsdale, the Robin Center area, and the Terrace Center. Future land-use recommendations include an increase in mixed-use development to replace currently single-use commercial areas, and is concentrated along Bottineau Boulevard and West Broadway Avenue.

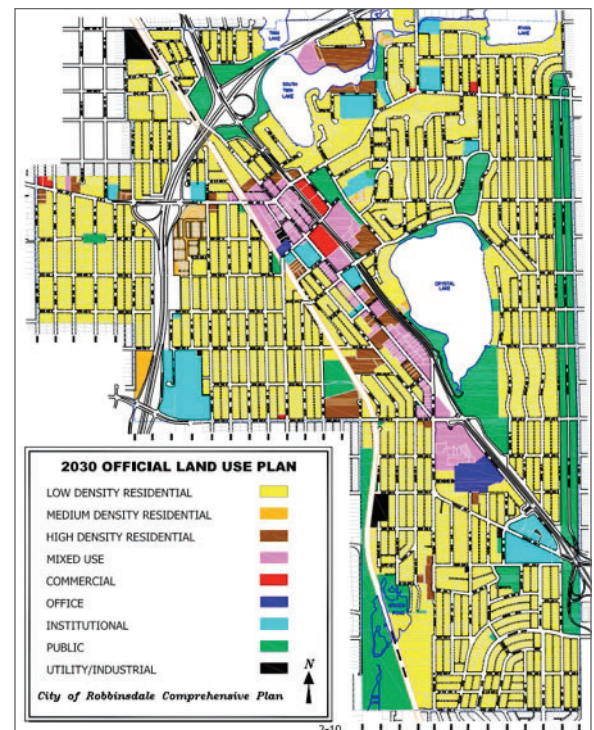
### 1.3.4 - Implications For This Plan

- Barriers to network connectivity in the form of wide and busy roadways should be identified, and treatment measures should be pursued along routes and at intersections and crossings to create a more comfortable environment for walking and biking;
- Comfortable and convenient walking and biking connections to schools, commercial and employment centers, and parks should be provided to give residents and visitors more mobility options for transportation and recreation trips;
- Downtown Robbinsdale and the Terrace Center should be a focus for enhanced multi-modal connections, including improved access and circulation related to business and buildings.

### 2030 Comprehensive Plan Land Use Recommendations



*Robbinsdale land use as of 2008.*



*The 2030 Land Use Plan includes an increase in mixed use development (pink) and decrease in single-use commercial (red).*

## 1.4 - Demographics and Population Characteristics

Demographic information including population density, age, income, and travel patterns helps to shape understanding about how Robbinsdale residents may interact with the transportation network, and rely on it to meet their daily mobility needs.

### 1.4.1 - Population Density and Households

The 2010 U.S. Census counted 13,953 people in Robbinsdale and 6,080 households across 2.79 square miles. This yields a population density of 4,999 persons and 2,179 households per square mile. By comparison, Hennepin County has an overall population density of 2,082 persons and 865 households per square mile.

Of the 6,080 Robbinsdale households in 2010:

- Average household size was 2.28 persons;
- Average family size was 2.99 persons;
- 67% were 1 and 2 person households;
- 56% (3,375) were family households;
- 28% (1,687) included individuals under 18 years of age;
- 22.6% (1,364) included individuals over 65 years of age

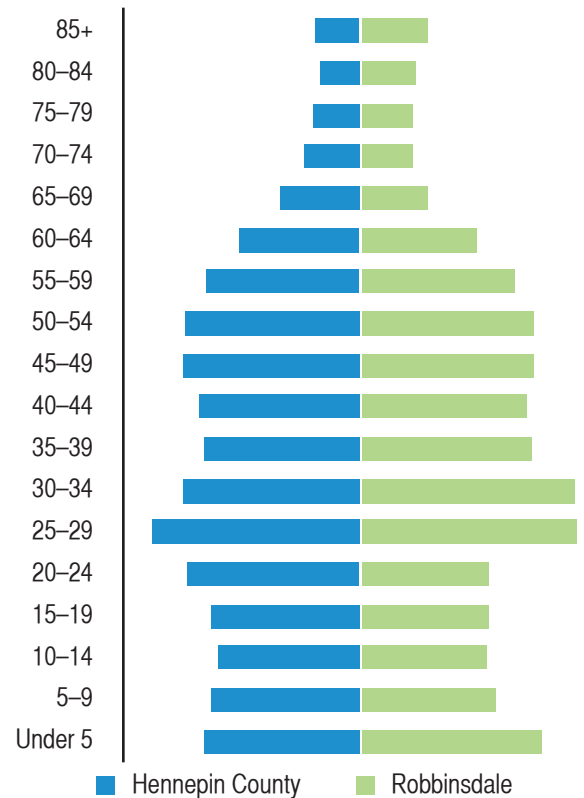
### 1.4.2 - Age Distribution

Almost a quarter of Robbinsdale’s population (22%) is less than 18 years of age, and about 15% of its population is of school age (between 5 and 18 years of age). Almost 12% of the population are senior adults 65 years of age or older. The median age for the city is 36.9 years.

### 1.4.3 - Income Levels

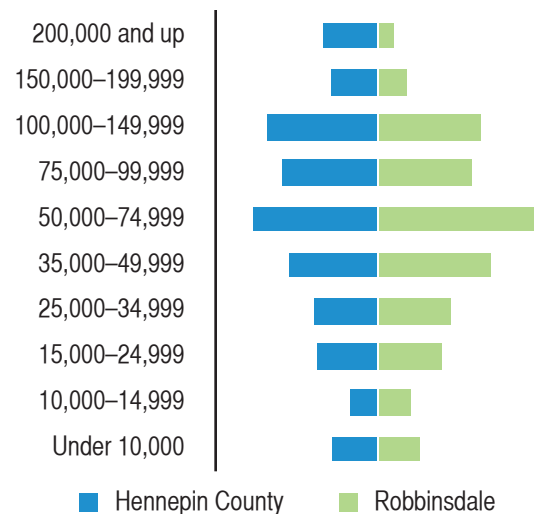
According to (2008-2012) U.S. Census American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, the median household income in Robbinsdale was \$54,731. The same survey estimated that 10.0% of all persons residing in Robbinsdale fall below the poverty line. By contrast, Hennepin County has a median

### Age Distribution



**Robbinsdale has slightly fewer school-age children, and slightly more elderly residents than Hennepin County on a whole.**

### Income Distribution



**Income levels in Robbinsdale are lower than Hennepin County as a whole.**

household income of \$63,559 and an estimated poverty rate of 12.6%.

### 1.4.4 - Commuting and Travel Patterns

A total of 355 residents in Robbinsdale (about 4.2% of total employed Robbinsdale residents) also work in Robbinsdale, according to 2011 figures from the U.S. Census, Center for Economic Studies. This means that cities other than Robbinsdale are the most popular destination for commuters among locations for employment.

A total of 8,195 (95.8% of total employed) live in Robbinsdale but work outside of the city. Of these that commute to destinations outside of Robbinsdale, 1,864 work in Minneapolis, and 1,126 work in the nearby communities of Golden Valley, Plymouth, and Brooklyn Park. The rest commute to other locations, including St Paul, Bloomington, St Louis Park, Minnetonka, and others.

The U.S. Census (2008-2012) American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates can be used to determine the mode of travel among commuters. According to these figures, 7,480 Robbinsdale residents commuted to work, nearly 7% take transit and 2.4% walk, while only 0.3% bike. By comparison, according to the same data, 6.4% of Minneapolis commuters walk to work, and 4.1% bike to work. Portland, Oregon leads the nation among large cities with about 6% of employees biking to work. Small and mid-sized cities are experiencing significant increases in the rates of bicycling. Many of the cities that lead the nation in the rate of biking (and walking) to work are small cities between 20,000 and 100,000 people.

#### How do Robbinsdale residents get to work?

This is how employed Robbinsdale residents arrive to work, according to the 2010 US Census:

Means of travel	Number of workers	Percent of total
Drove alone	5,750	76.9%
Carpooled	697	9.3%
Public transit	515	6.9%
Walked	182	2.4%
Other (estimate*)	116	1.6%
Work at home	220	2.9%

*\* Includes employees who primarily travel to work by bicycle.*

#### Did you know?

- Almost one quarter (24%) of trips made by Dutch seniors 65 or older are made by bicycle
- Almost one out of every five trips (18%) made by German seniors are by bicycle
- About 0.2% of US senior trips are by bike

*Source: John Pucher and Lewis Dijkstra, Promoting Safe Walking and Cycling to Improve Public Health: Lessons from the Netherlands and Germany. American Journal of Public Health, Vol. 93, No. 9, September 2003.*

### 1.4.5 - Implications For This Plan

- Just over one-third of Robbinsdale's population is either under the age of 18 or over the age of 65. Providing safe, comfortable, and convenient walking and biking connections to schools, parks, recreation centers, and transit is an important focus for this plan.
- Connecting low-income populations with important destinations including transit, employment opportunities, school, community centers, and basic needs including pharmacies and grocery stores will help improve convenience and quality of life.



***Pedestrians in downtown Robbinsdale.***



## 1.5 - Relevant Policies and Plans

Current local, state and federal policies offer strong support for making improvements that benefit pedestrian and bicycle mobility throughout the Twin Cities metropolitan region. The following plans and policies have implications for pedestrian and bicycle planning in Robbinsdale.

### 1.5.1 - The Local Context

#### Complete Streets Policy

In July 2013, the City of Robbinsdale formally adopted a Complete Streets Policy and proclaimed its support for designing, constructing, and operating the city's transportation system to enable safe access for users of all modes of transportation, and of all ages and abilities. The City outlined specific principles including connecting system gaps and installing pedestrian and bike-specific infrastructure elements.

#### Comprehensive Plan

The Robbinsdale 2030 Comprehensive Plan establishes the city's direction for growth, redevelopment and infrastructure improvements, land use decisions, development requests and public investments based on projections to the year 2030. It includes detailed guidance regarding: land use, redevelopment, and community image; housing; transportation; public utilities including water, sewer, and solid waste; and parks and open spaces. The Plan briefly identifies walkway and bikeway systems, as well as barriers (all major transportation corridors) and potential opportunities.

#### Bottineau Boulevard Land Use and Transit-Oriented Development Plan

This document provides a vision for how Transit-Oriented-Development (TOD) goals and principles could be applied to areas that include automobile-oriented development. Key sites and strategic connections were identified to illustrate how the area may intensify over time but with minimal impact on uses not likely to change.



**The Bottineau LRT Blue Line Extension will offer LRT service to Downtown Robbinsdale, increasing demand for walking and biking trips.**  
Image courtesy of metro council.org.

#### Bottineau LRT Transitway Station Area Pre-Planning Study

This study was a collaboration between Hennepin County, Metropolitan Council, and the six cities along the future Bottineau LRT Transitway, including Robbinsdale. The study establishes a corridor-wide vision to guide decision-making for future planning and implementation, and identifies key destinations, transit-oriented development opportunities, and important walking and biking connections.

Population and employment growth, combined with mixed-use redevelopment, means increased demand for walking and biking trips to connect to destinations in these areas. Integrated safe, connected, and comfortable facilities for walking and biking to and within these areas can support important increases in walking and biking trips.

### 1.5.2 - Metropolitan Council

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

#### 2030 Transportation Policy Plan

The Metropolitan Council’s 2030 Transportation Policy Plan includes several policies that strongly recommend provision of pedestrian and bicycle facilities. Support for pedestrian and bicycle improvements are evident in the following policy:

**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 ... 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.”*

#### Regional Bike System Master Plan

MetCouncil conducted a Regional Bicycle System Study in 2013 - 2014, which proposed a set of Priority Regional Bicycle Transportation Corridors. It also developed a set of guiding principles for identifying regional bicycle corridors. Candidate corridors include connection to Robbinsdale.

## 1.5.3 - Hennepin County

### Complete Streets Policy

Robbinsdale is located within Hennepin County, which was the first county in Minnesota to adopt a [Complete Streets Policy](#). Adopted in July 2009, the purpose of the policy is to ensure that streets under the county's jurisdiction are designed and operated to assure safety and accessibility for all roadway users - including pedestrians, bicyclists, transit riders and motorists.

### Pedestrian Plan

The first Hennepin County Pedestrian Plan was published in September 2013. The pedestrian plan ultimately became part of the overall 2030 Transportation Systems Plan, as well as supplementing the county's Complete Streets Policy. The City of Robbinsdale was identified as being a medium-high to high priority by the County for pedestrian improvements along county roads.

### Bicycle Plan

Hennepin County is working with Three Rivers Park District to update the 1997 Hennepin County bike plan to reflect current and growing uses of cycling in the region. A final version of the plan is expected in early 2015.

#### Did you know?

Hennepin County dedicates funds every year as part of its capital budget to support the development of Complete Streets along its road network and bicycle system:

- **For sidewalks:** \$200,000 annual budget, providing up to 25% of the cost of a sidewalk along a county road;
- **For bikeways:** \$300,000 annual budget, providing up to 50% of the cost of trail or on-street bikeway identified on the Hennepin County bicycle system plan or gap map; and
- **For bikeway gaps:** \$300,000 annual budget, providing up to 50% of the cost of trail or on-street bikeway identified on the Hennepin County bicycle system gap map.

Several important streets in Robbinsdale are part of the Hennepin County road network, including Broadway Avenue W (CR 8), Lake Drive / 42nd Avenue N / 45th Avenue N (CR 9), and Bottineau Boulevard (CR 81).

### 1.5.4 - At the State Level

#### Minnesota Complete Streets Law

On May 15, 2010, Governor Tim Pawlenty signed the Minnesota transportation policy bill, which made Complete Streets part of Minnesota law. As defined under Minnesota Statute 175.74, Complete Streets is the “planning, scoping, design, implementation, operation, and maintenance of roads in order to reasonably address the safety and accessibility needs of users of all ages and abilities.”

Minnesota’s Complete Streets laws and policies direct state transportation agencies to design and operate Minnesota roads to enable safe access for all users, including pedestrians, bicyclists and motorists.

#### Other Minnesota Statutes

##### Chapter 174, Minnesota Transportation Goals

- Promote and increase bicycling as an energy-efficient, non-polluting and healthful transportation alternative;
- Provide safe transportation to users throughout the state;
- Provide multi-modal and inter-modal transportation that enhances mobility, economic development, and provides access to all persons.

##### Chapter 116D, State Environmental Policy

State government shall use all practicable means to:

- Assure safe, healthful, and aesthetic surroundings for all citizens;
- Maintain variety of individual choice;
- Encourage styles of living that minimize environmental degradation.

#### Lowering speed limits in Minnesota cities

Minnesota statutes currently allow cities and other jurisdictions to **lower speed limits to 25 miles per hour without need of any additional engineering or traffic study if a bicycle lane is provided.**

According to Minnesota Statute 160.263, Bicycle lanes and ways, Subdivision 4, Speed on street with bicycle lane:

*“Notwithstanding section 169.14, subdivision 5, the governing body of any political subdivision, by resolution or ordinance and without an engineering or traffic investigation, may designate a safe speed for any street or highway under its authority upon which it has established a bicycle lane; provided that such safe speed shall not be lower than 25 miles per hour. The ordinance or resolution designating a safe speed is effective when appropriate signs designating the speed are erected along the street or highway, as provided by the governing body.”*

## Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) policies

The Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) is a national leader in Context-Sensitive Solutions (CSS) and is recognized for policies that strongly advocate for the provision of adequate facilities for pedestrians and bicyclists.

### Americans with Disabilities Act Transition Plan

The MnDOT Americans with Disabilities Act Transition Plan, updated in July 2011, states: *“The success of making our transportation system fully accessible depends on the coordinated efforts of all levels of government, the public, and the policies and strategies outlined in this plan. MnDOT will continue to look for opportunities to involve citizens, stakeholders and partners in the implementation of this plan, future updates to the plan, and in policy decisions affecting accessibility. Together, we can realize a shared vision of an accessible, safe, efficient, and sustainable transportation system.”*

### Minnesota Go Long-Term Comprehensive Transportation Plan

MnDOT is currently in the process of developing a comprehensive multi-modal statewide transportation plan. The Statewide Bicycle System Plan, currently underway, is a part of that larger plan. Pedestrian and transit focused plans are also anticipated to guide the transportation vision for the next 50 years.

### MnDOT Reference Documents

The following list of reference documents have been prepared by MnDOT and are related to bicycle and pedestrian travel:

- 2007 Bikeways Facility Design Manual;
- 2013 Minnesota’s Best Practices for Pedestrian/Bicycle Safety;
- 2013 Best Practices Synthesis and Guidance in At-Grade Trail-Crossing Treatments.

## 1.5.5 - Federal Policies

### AASHTO guidance

The American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) is a standards-setting body that publishes specifications and policies guiding highway design and construction practices throughout the United States. Its policies strongly support accommodation of bicyclists and recommend the provision of adequate bicycle facilities:

*“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.”*

In 2012, AASHTO released a new bicycle planning guide (Guide for the Development of Bicycle Facilities, 4th Edition). Developed with guidance obtained through the NCHRP (National Cooperative Highway Research Program), it supplements other guides such as:

- 2009 Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices
- 2011 Policy on Geometric Design of Highways and Streets, 6th Edition, “Green Book” (AASHTO)
- PROWAG (a formal set of public rights-of-way accessibility guidelines)
- 2010 Highway Capacity Manual

The new AASHTO guide covers paths and on-road bikeways and features bikeway level of service (LOS) considerations for roadway design. The guide:

- Authorizes the narrowing of motor-vehicle lanes - down to and including 10 foot and 11 foot widths - in order to better accommodate pedestrian and bicycle needs
- Provides nuanced guidance on bike lane design

- Is consistent with all applicable Federal / FHWA guidance, so that all projects designed in accordance with the 2012 AASHTO Bicycle Guide should be acceptable for and eligible for receiving federal funding
- Provides greater flexibility in the design process in order to better accommodate bicycling in urban contexts

AASHTO’s 2004 pedestrian planning guide (Guide for the Planning, Design, and Operation of Pedestrian Facilities, 1st Edition) is slated for an updated version in 2015-2016. Other potentially helpful reference manuals from AASHTO include: the 2014 Guide for Geometric Design of Transit Facilities on Highways and Streets, 1st Edition and the 2004 Guide for Park-and-Ride Facilities, 2nd Edition.

**Federal agencies**

The [Bicycle & Pedestrian Program](#) of the Federal Highway Administration's (FHWA) Office of Human Environment promotes bicycle and pedestrian transportation use, safety, and accessibility.

FHWA also sponsors resources such as the [Pedestrian and Bicycle Information Center](#) to provide information on a wide variety of engineering, encouragement, education, and enforcement topics. The Center was established with funding from the US DOT and is operated by the University of North Carolina Highway Safety Research Center.

The [FHWA Bicycle & Pedestrian Program](#) issues guidance and is responsible for overseeing that requirements in legislation are understood and met by the States and other implementing agencies. The FHWA also grants Interim Approval of new traffic control devices, a revision to the application or manner of use of an existing traffic control device,

or a provision not specifically described in the MUTCD. Of recent significance is the FHWA’s Interim Approval of the optional use of green colored pavement in marked bicycle lanes and in extensions of bicycle lanes through intersections and other traffic conflict areas (see [Interim Approval document IA-14](#)).

**Federal law**

MAP-21, the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (P.L. 112-141), was signed into law by President Barack Obama on July 6, 2012. Funding surface transportation programs at over \$105 billion for fiscal years 2013 and 2014, MAP-21 is the first long-term highway authorization enacted since 2005. Although the law reduces direct Federal funding for biking and walking projects, it presents a mechanism for funding these projects through state and local governments to fully utilize available funds to make biking and walking safer and more convenient.