

*NON-MOTORIZED  
TRANSPORTATION  
PLAN*

*CITY OF MUNISING, MI  
&  
THE MUNISING DDA*

*Enhancing active transport & mobility in Munising*

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## INTRODUCTION

The City of Munising is a quaint and charming city located in Alger County in Michigan's Upper Peninsula. The City is situated at the head of Munising Bay of Lake Superior. Munising is a compact city with a strong sense of place, with a population of 2,355 persons, according to the 2010 Census. The City is blessed with both a stable economy that includes wood products industry, strong multi-seasonal tourism, government and services. The surrounding hillsides, the Munising Bayshore and close proximity to the Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore creates a beautiful natural setting for the City.

This plan has been created by the City of Munising **Downtown Development Authority**, in partnership with the **Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians Strategic Health Alliance**, to provide a locally tailored and community supported approach to meeting the pedestrian and bicycle transportation needs of the community, both now and in the future. The plan brings together previous planning efforts by the City and others.

The City of Munising efforts have included planning and implementing a bike path along the City's north side. The recent conversion of Munising Avenue (M-28) from a 4 lane to a 3 lane roadway directly supports the concept of walkability and traffic safety.

The City has also supported the local Safe Routes to School program (SR2S), a community-initiated effort to improve pedestrian conditions in order to promote children walking to school. Several projects are currently being implemented and completed, including a sidewalk on Cherry Street to Superior Street, and two (2) new cross-walks added; one at Cherry Street and the other at the High School just a few feet East of Hickory Street on M-28, both providing a safer crossing of M-28.

This document also supports the Munising Downtown Development Authority's desire to enhance the pedestrian experience downtown and attract residents and visitors to the business district.

This document should be viewed as a compilation of previous and current efforts to enhance the Munising walking and biking experience. The Plan will be of great benefit for seeking future funding of recommended projects.

This document presents background information, analysis of existing conditions and the issues pedestrians and bicyclists face within the City. The final component of this Plan is an action plan that will assist the City in prioritizing projects in the future.

## THE PLANNING PROCESS

This document was prepared with consultation with the City of Munising administration, various stakeholders, participants in previous Safe Routes to School planning efforts, and the Munising Downtown Development Authority. Work initiated and completed by the Sault Tribe of Chippewa Indians *Strategic Alliance for Health Project* has been key to the interest in walkability and non-motorized transport in Munising.



## DEFINING THE PROBLEM

The obesity crisis in America and its impacts on public health and causes is well documented. While there are a number of reasons for this national health problem, the lack of daily physical activity is cited as a major contributor. In effect, walking and biking have been designed out of our communities in favor of the automobile. This trend began following World War II and continues even to this day. There are entire suburban cities that can only be accessed via auto.

Linking land use and non-motorized mobility is essential to the quality of life the city can offer. Sprawling low density development generates longer commutes, and poorly served neighborhoods with fewer local amenities and hubs. The social connections that make a place feel 'local' are also discouraged when sprawling residential neighborhoods are further and further away from the heart of the city.

Creating choice in how we move around gives individuals the freedom to choose the mode they feel best suits each journey. With choice we can find the most efficient, most enjoyable and most logical way to make each journey based on cost, time and personal preference. There are very few options and this creates wasteful, inefficient and not necessarily enjoyable journey choices. If we have choice then we can base our decision on a combination of factors, such as time of year, recreation or saving cash.

Not everyone drives a car. Children, the elderly and disabled have the right to independent mobility too, but a system that is based predominantly on the car excludes these people, and limits opportunity for transport as part of a healthy lifestyle.

The percentage of household income spent on fuel has risen 10 fold in 10 years. This trend is set to continue, leaving less income available for socializing and leisure. Today almost all journeys are made by car. In such a small city where many live and work in the city, this is unnecessary. A city should benefit from a wide variety of mobility choices.

Bicycling and walking are the cheapest and most basic forms of transportation. However, the two activities are generally under used. There are many different reasons people do not ride their bike or walk for transportation. These reasons generally have to do with safety (perceived and actual), weather and lack of facilities. Planning and developing a safe and efficient bicycle and pedestrian transportation network can enhance the aesthetic value of the area as well as encourage residents to walk or bicycle in all seasons as transportation instead of taking the car.

Creating options for how we move around gives individuals the freedom to choose the mode they feel best suits each journey, based on cost, time and personal preference. These choices are limited in Munising. When there are options, individuals can base their decision on a combination of factors, such as time of year, recreation or saving money.



## TYPES OF PEDESTRIANS AND BICYCLISTS

Before planning for bicyclists and pedestrians, it is important to define them. A pedestrian according to the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO), a pedestrian is defined as “a person afoot or in a wheelchair”. A bicycle is defined in Section 257.4 of the Michigan State Vehicle Code, Act 300 of 1949, as ““Bicycle” means a device propelled by human power upon which a person may ride, having either 2 or 3 wheels in a tandem or tricycle arrangement, all of which are over 14 inches in diameter.” Michigan State Statute also allows bicycles on all Michigan highways and roads except limited access freeways or unless otherwise posted.

There are different types of pedestrians and bicyclists. Pedestrians are the easiest group to accommodate; although there are many different ages and abilities of pedestrians. Most pedestrians can be accommodated sufficiently by providing sidewalks or paths along most roadways. Walking is part of every journey we make regardless of mode. Even when driving we walk from where we park to our final destination.

How and where people bicycle is affected by their ability. Cycling could be the fastest and most convenient way to travel, with many secondary benefits to health and wellbeing. However to create this efficiency and feeling of comfort requires infrastructure and maintenance

Bicyclists can be classified into three broad categories; however, it is important to recognize that some casual or novice riders will eventually become experienced cyclists if an encouraging bicycle system is developed. The three broad categories of bicyclists are described below:

- **Advanced or experienced adults** who are capable of operating under most traffic conditions.
- **Casual or novice adults and teenagers** who are less confident in their ability to operate in traffic on collector and arterial streets without provisions for bicyclists.
- **Children** may not be mature mentally or physically capable of bicycling safely without adult supervision.
  - A subgroup of the child bicyclists category are preteen riders whose bicycle use is initially monitored by adults, but who are eventually allowed to ride unsupervised on the road system. The majority of their riding will occur on local residential streets with low vehicle speeds and volumes, but they do require access to key destinations such as schools, recreation facilities and neighborhood shopping areas. Most preteens (if they have been given proper bicycle education) will behave more like casual adult cyclists and thus are considered a subgroup.
  - Another subgroup of bicyclists is teenagers who have taken driver's education. For many, driver's education is where they are first formally introduced to the concepts of vehicular traffic. This information is critical to safe bicycle operation and should be provided at a much earlier age.

## BENEFITS OF WALKING AND BICYCLING

In undergoing this planning effort and implementing this plan, the City hopes to encourage the benefits of a safe and efficient walking and bicycling environment. The benefits to walking and biking include:

- **Transportation** – Walking and bicycling are the most basic and inexpensive forms of transportation. Many trips currently taken by motor vehicle are within walking or bicycling distance.



- Health and Fitness
- Recreational opportunity – Many residents of the City walk or bicycle for fun.
- Environmental Friendly
- Mitigation of traffic congestion – As a community grows (residents and tourists), the most effective method of reducing traffic congestion is to reduce the dependency on motor vehicles. In many communities, this can be achieved by increasing the viability of walking and bicycling.
- Quality of Life – Walking and bicycling have been proven to be excellent indicators of the overall health of a community.
- Economic Development – The City’s ability to attract and retain businesses and residents depends on the ability to adapt to changing economic times. Many of the changing economic factors such as increased cost of fuel, emphasis on health, and aging population have connections to providing a safe and efficient walking and bicycling transportation system.

## WINTER WALKING AND BIKING

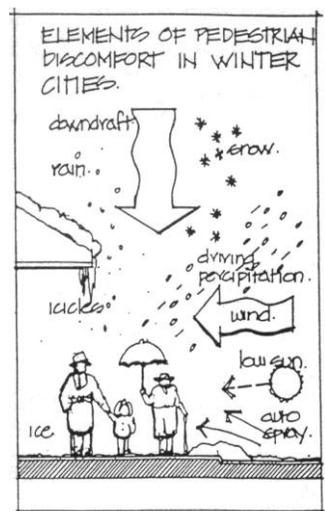
During winter, walking and biking becomes more difficult and often uncomfortable. This is a simple fact, however, in recent years, there has been increased interest in walking and riding bikes in all seasons. There are even specialized bicycles made especially for winter road and trail riding.

If winter cities like Munising desire to make our communities more walkable, then we must consider all these environmental and psychological factors in our infrastructure and maintenance. The problem is, these factors have generally not been considered, in fact, the prevailing thinking is that people do not or will not walk in winter no matter what. This total dedication to the auto is changing, however, as more persons are choosing to walk and ride bikes in winter cities and demanding better conditions. This change is primarily driven by the need and desire of many to walk for health benefits. Walkability also influences a city's ability to attract new investment in business, jobs and residents to the central city, as more people desire to spend less time commuting and to live near where they work.



Creating a good walking environment requires a commitment to maintain the walking surface for pedestrians. This of course is much easier in cities with light or sporadic snow events, as compared to Munising, which receives significantly more snow. City governments in snowbelt areas generally have been reluctant to commit to walkway maintenance because of cost, and the belief that “people do not walk in the winter”. It is simply a matter of priorities!

In some winter cities, the burden of sidewalk winter maintenance is left to the property owner. Some communities have ordinances relating to maintenance of walkways, however, these are not always enforced consistently. The whole question of liability also limits winter maintenance of walkways. Our society today is much more litigious than in the past. It seems someone else is always to blame for misfortunes, and slip and fall accident claims are common in the courts. If it is the city’s responsibility for maintenance, then the city government may be liable for injuries due to accidents, slips and falls. Many local governments are reluctant to assume this perceived liability.



## EXISTING CONDITIONS

The City of Munising is a compact community with a grid development pattern throughout much of its developed area. The grid pattern of short blocks is conducive for walking and bicycling, as it provides choices for connecting to various destinations around town. Sidewalks are generally present throughout the developed area in the central city.

The steep hillside topography to the south and west of the City has limited development in these areas. Linear development has occurred to the northeast of the City along the Bayshore and H-58, and out to Sand Point, and northwest along M-28 to the City limits. This linear development pattern generally lacks sidewalks and connectivity. A sidewalk exists on the north side of M-28 out to the Munising High School.

The M-28 corridor enters the City from the south, proceeds north to Munising Avenue, then heads west around downtown. This highway corridor does present a significant barrier to non-motorized mobility. North of downtown, M-28 has a wide cross section that includes two travel lanes, a center turn lane and two wide parking lanes. This segment is difficult to cross for pedestrians. For years, M-28 has been viewed as a barrier for tourists visiting the Bayshore Park and the Pictured Rocks Cruises, a major destination in the City. A traffic signal at Maple Street provides a safe crossing area, but would benefit from more robust crosswalks to alert drivers of the presence of pedestrians and to strengthen the connection to downtown.

The Munising Safe Routes to School program (SR2S) is a community-initiated effort to improve pedestrian conditions in order to promote children walking to school. Several projects are currently being implemented and construction completed, including a sidewalk on Cherry Street to Superior Street, and two (2) new cross-walks across M-28; one at Cherry Street and the other at the High School just a few feet East of Hickory Street, both providing a safer crossing of M-28.



A number of recreational trails crisscross the hillside south of town but lack good connections into the City.

In recent years, steps have been taken by the City of Munising to enhance pedestrian safety and connections. A major improvement for the City was the reduction of travel lanes on M-28, from four lanes to three with a center turn lane. Segments of a bike path have been constructed north of downtown, and out H-58/Munising Avenue. Several gaps remain to be completed. Efforts to plan a bike path out past H-58 to Sand Point were thwarted by a National Park Service requirement to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement, a very costly endeavor.

The Sault Tribe of Chippewa Indians *Strategic Alliance for Health Project* has actively been promoting and working towards non-motorized transport in Munising. A *Complete Streets* project kicked off in Munising with the Walkable Community workshops with national walkability expert Dan Burden in October 2009. These workshops served to highlight the strengths and challenges, and broadened the circle of people in the community motivated to develop Complete Streets in Munising.



Recently the ALTRAN Transit Authority completed the construction of a bus station and pocket park in downtown Munising. The park includes restrooms, an information kiosk, bike racks and a bus stop. A broader part of the pocket park plan is the development of connected walkways through a network of alleys in town. Currently the alleys are not very inviting for pedestrians, but makeovers of these areas are a part of the bigger plan.

## ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Meetings with stakeholders identified a number of issues and opportunities that are listed below:

### Issues & Barriers:

- M-28:
  - Must cross the highway to get to the lakeshore
  - People visiting the lakeshore must cross the highway to get to many business downtown
  - Students who don't drive to the High School must cross the highway
- Topography & steep hillsides limits mobility
- Winter: perceptions and significant snow

### Opportunities:

- Incorporate Transit stops into non-motorized system
- Year-round maintenance of key pedestrian routes
- Wayfinding signage directed at a pedestrian scale
- Designate walking loops within the downtown
- Improve Alley connection from existing multi-use path to the High School
- Create multi-use path along M28 from Citgo to City boundary
- Create a connection to Tourist Park



## DEVELOPMENT PLAN

This section of the report identifies a development plan for continued non-motorized improvements in Munising. While much progress has been made in recent years, there are critical gaps in the system, as well as enhancements to existing facilities and new projects to improve connectivity and pedestrian safety.

The accompanying Development Plan map identifies the existing non-motorized system and planned future improvements.

The table on the following page outlines the projects, budgets, and general responsibilities for implementing projects.

It is recognized that the City of Munising has very limited resources and that other sources of funds will be required to match grants, and for preliminary design drawings and cost estimates required for grant applications. The City still plays a significant and important role in sponsoring grant applications and for working with MDOT, other Federal and State agencies, permitting and approvals.



<b>Project</b>	<b>Budget/Cost</b>	<b>Funding Opportunity</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>
Extend the existing bike path out Washington to the hospital.	Unknown	Transportation Enhancement Grants Recreational Trail Funds Foundations and Trail Groups	City
Create a new park and bridge over the Anna River to link trail segments	Unknown	Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund (MNRTF)	City
Work with property owners to route a connecting trail around the mill site	Unknown	Transportation Enhancement Grants Recreational Trail Funds Foundations and Trail Groups	DDA/City
Develop the alley and a trail segment north of Munising Avenue to connect the high school	\$50,000	Transportation Enhancement Grants Recreational Trail Funds Foundations and Trail Groups	DDA/City
Explore opportunities and challenges of a boardwalk connector on the Bay at the High School	\$100,000	Transportation Enhancement Grants Recreational Trail Funds Foundations and Trail Groups MI Coastal Management Program	City Munising Schools
Plan and develop a mountain bike trailhead just north of Walnut Street	\$25,000	Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund (MNRTF)	City
Use the existing water line easement to connect the City with Tourist Park	\$25,000	Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund (MNRTF)	City
Implement SR2S crosswalks on M-28 at Oak and Cherry Streets	Funded	MDOT	MDOT/City
Plan, Design and Implement permanent, in-pavement crosswalks downtown on M-28 at Superior, Onota, Elm and Maple Streets	\$25,000 Each	Transportation Enhancement Grants	DDA/MDOT
Downtown Walking Loop Tour and Alley Enhancements	\$50,000	DDA	DDA



## FUNDING PROGRAMS AND OPPORTUNITIES

### Recreation Grants

**The Recreational Trails Fund** is comprised of federal gas taxes that MDOT receives from the Federal Highway Administration and passes on to the DNR for administration and distribution. These funds are for the maintenance and development of recreational trails and related facilities. Annual appropriation by the Michigan Legislature varies, Fiscal Year 2005 Appropriation was \$1,800,000 – approximately \$1,500,000 available for grants.

**The Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund (MNRTF)** administered by the Department of Natural Resources provides grants for trail acquisition and development. Since its inception in 1976, the MNRTF has provided more than \$62 million in grants for 184 rail acquisition and development projects in 44 counties.

**Recreation Improvement Fund** are Federal funds for the operation, maintenance and development of recreation trails, restoration of lands damaged by off-road vehicles, and inland lake cleanup. There is no open application process and most of the money is used on DNR projects, a DNR Division can sponsor local projects.

### Michigan Transportation Fund – Section 10k of Public Act 51 of 1951

Administered by the Michigan Department of Transportation, Section 10k of Act 51 of 1951, as amended, (Michigan's transportation law (MCLA 247.660k)) reserves 1% of state transportation funds for non-motorized transportation. These funds can be used for on-road facilities such as paved road shoulders and bicycle lanes or off-road facilities such as shared use trails and sidewalks. However, many of the improvements on a road, street, or highway, which facilitates non-motorized transportation, can be considered qualified non-motorized expenditures for the purposes of this section.

### Local Sources

#### The Sault Tribe of Chippewa Indians

The Sault Tribe of Chippewa Indians wants to partner with Munising efforts to improve walkability, and can be a source of funding and support for projects

#### Transportation Improvements Program (TIP) and Capital Improvements Program (CIP)

Local units of government can include and fund non-motorized improvements, within road rights-of-ways, as incidental parts of larger transportation projects, and thus these improvements qualify for the same transportation funds as the rest of the roadway construction or improvement project.

#### Millages, Bonds and Assessments

Local, county, or state millages and bond issues may be passed by voters or governing bodies. A number of Michigan communities have millages for park operations, maintenance, development, and land acquisition. This can be one of the most effective approaches for funding a local trail system initiative.



## Foundations and Organized Trails Groups

Trail Groups and Foundations have the ability to raise capital and generate local support for trail acquisition and development projects. Notable examples include:

- The *Iron Ore Heritage Trail Authority* is an excellent example of a locally funded organization that has been able to leverage its funding from local millage with Federal and State Grants. The trail runs from the City of Marquette west to Republic, MI.
- The *Southeast Michigan Community Foundations Greenways Initiative*, which recently completed a \$25 million matching funds grant campaign.
- The *West Michigan Trails and Greenways Coalition (WMTGC)*, which has been actively raising money to meet their goal of \$6 million to leverage state and federal grants for the construction of nearly 140 miles of new trails.
- The *Kalamazoo River Valley Trailway Coalition*, which began a \$8 million fundraising campaign in 2006 with the goal of supporting the construction of the 30 mile Kalamazoo River Valley Trailway.

## Businesses

Local businesses are frequent partners in the promotion of non-motorized transportation and trail projects. Public-spirited companies provide meeting rooms, provide small grants, donate copying or printing services on company equipment, or free or reduced-fee use of the company's special services.

## Friends Groups and Other Organizations

The long-term success of many trail projects and non-motorized initiatives has been due to "friends" groups and advocacy organizations that follow a project from inception to implementation. Friends groups can also provide a number of services including, physical labor as through "Adopt-a-Trail" maintenance or construction activities, fundraising, user education, promotion, and actual surveillance of the facility.

Civic groups and school groups can play an important role in supports of non-motorized projects through advocacy, promotion, and hosting events. Local organizations often best understand local needs.

