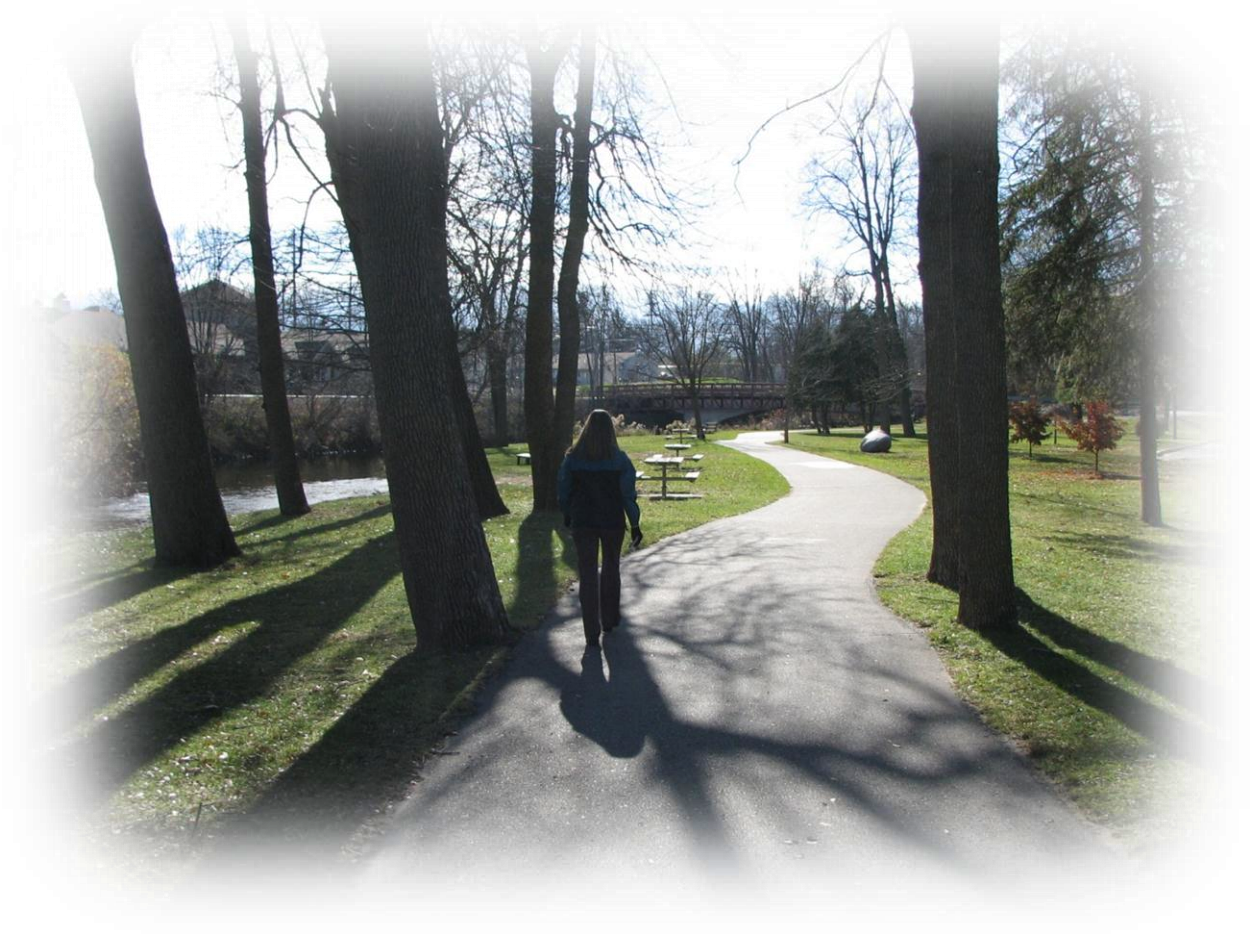
Greater Mt. Pleasant Area Non-motorized Plan



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Contents

1. Introduction

The Greater Mt. Pleasant Area Non-motorized Transportation Plan presents a clear vision of how the City of Mt. Pleasant, Union Township, Central Michigan University and the Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe may improve their non-motorized connections as well as links to surrounding communities and regional trail resources in Isabella County. The plan looks at how these communities may transform their streets into outstanding attractive public spaces that are friendly to bicyclist, pedestrians and transit users while continuing to serve the needs of motorized traffic. This plan complements the goals of existing redevelopment, trail planning, energy efficiency, storm water mitigation, recreation, wayfinding and community enhancement efforts within the communities. Once implemented, the proposed improvements will help the Greater Mt. Pleasant Area continue to be an attractive place to live, work, get an education and play.

Helping to shape this plan, has been a dedicated group of elected officials, appointed officials, public employees and the general public. The results of an on-line survey and the input gathered at two public workshops guided the proposed non-motorized network as well as setting implementation priorities.

The Non-Motorized Master Plan recommendations will help establish a physical and cultural environment that supports and encourages safe, comfortable and convenient ways for pedestrians and bicyclists to travel throughout the city and into the surrounding communities. It is anticipated that the physical cultural changes will result in a greater number of individuals choosing walking and bicycling as their preferred mode of transportation for many local trips. These choices will in turn lead to healthier lifestyles, improved air and water quality, and a more energy efficient and sustainable transportation system.

The document is divided into eight main segments:

Goals and Objectives
Vision that guides the plan

Inventory & Analysis
Assesses the state of the existing pedestrian and bicycle facilities

Proposed Facilities
Covers the specific infrastructure improvements to the transportation system to establish a non-motorized transportation network

Implementation Plan
Provides the phasing, costs and funding recommendations for near, mid and long term improvements to the non-motorized network

Planning & Zoning Review and Recommendations
Describes how planning and zoning codes can be structured to support a bicycle and pedestrian friendly community

Proposed Policies & Programs
Describes the support system necessary for a successful pedestrian and bicycle network

Education & Marketing
Provides ways to promote non-motorized transportation while providing information on safe bicycling and walking

Design Guidelines
Provides a background on non-motorized transportation issues and defines current best practices for bicycle and pedestrian facility design

1.1 Why Walking and Bicycling Are Important

A comprehensive non-motorized transportation system based on best practices is of paramount importance to the health, safety and general welfare of the citizens of the Greater Mt. Pleasant Area. The benefits of a comprehensive non-motorized transportation system extend beyond the direct benefits to the users of the system to the public as a whole. A well-implemented non-motorized transportation system will reap rewards by:

- Providing viable transportation alternatives for individuals who are capable of independent travel yet do not hold a driver's license or have access to a motor vehicle at all times.
- Improving safety, especially for the young and old who are at most risk due to their dependence on non-motorized facilities and their physical abilities.
- Improving access for the 20% of all Americans who have some type of disability and the 10% of all Americans who have a serious disability.[1]
- Improving the economic viability of a community by making it an attractive place to locate a business while simultaneously reducing public and private health care costs associated with inactivity.
- Encouraging healthy lifestyles by promoting active living.
- Reducing the water, air, and noise pollution associated with automobile use by shifting local trips from automobiles to walking or bicycling.
- Improving the aesthetics of the roadway and community by adding landscaping and medians that improve the pedestrian environment and safety.
- Providing more transportation choices that respect an individual's religious beliefs, environmental ethic, and/or uneasiness in operating a vehicle.
- Reducing the need for parking spaces.
- Creating a stronger social fabric by fostering the personal interaction that takes place while on foot or on bicycle.
- Reducing dependence on and use of fossil fuel with the resulting positive impact on climate change.

Improvements to non-motorized facilities touch all individuals directly, as almost all trips begin and end as a pedestrian.

Where We Are Now

There is little question that the most significant influence on the design of American communities is the automobile. About eighty percent of America has been built in the last fifty years.[2] During those years, the design of everything from homes, neighborhoods, shopping center, schools, workplaces and churches have been profoundly shaped around the car. This is true not only for the site-specific placement of driveways and parking lots, but also the distribution and mixing of land uses.

[1] Disability Status: 2000 - Census 2000 Brief.
[2] Jim Kunstler, *Geography of Nowhere.*

Accommodations to the automobile came not simply as the logical outgrowth of an additional mode of travel, but often at the expense of bicycling, walking and transit. Increases in automobile volumes and speeds have made sharing a roadway uncomfortable and often unsafe. Also, the need for additional rights-of-way to accommodate added vehicle lanes has regularly come at the expense of space typically set aside for sidewalks.

The pattern of public investment in motor vehicle transportation above all other modes has resulted in an overall reduction in transportation options for the average citizen. Communities are now weighing the convenience of the automobile against the consequences of its use at current levels and trying to strike a balance. The direct and indirect consequences include:

- Current guidelines for exercise call for one hour of activity daily. Physical inactivity is a primary factor in at least 200,000 deaths annually and 25% of all chronic disease-related deaths.[3] Forty percent of adults do not participate in any leisure time physical activity;[4] of those who do participate in exercise, 66.1% use their local streets.[5]
- About 40% of all trips are estimated to be less than two miles which is an easy distance for walking or bicycling, provided appropriate facilities are available. In practice, automobiles are used for 76% of all trips under one mile and 91% of all trips between one and two miles.[6]
- While money for bicycle and pedestrian projects has increased dramatically since 1989 with the passage of federal transportation programs known as ISTEA and TEA-21, in Michigan, only $0.16 per person is spent on pedestrian facilities vs. $58.49 per person on highway projects annually.[7]
- The nation is experiencing an obesity epidemic; 61% of Michigan's adults are considered overweight, which is the second highest rate in the country.[8] While there may be other significant factors, the increase in obesity nationally over the past fifteen years corresponds with an increase in the number of miles driven and a decrease in the number of trips made by walking and bicycling. This epidemic is estimated to result in $22 billion a year in health care and personal expenses.[9]
- In southeast Michigan, people spend on average 18.8% of their income on transportation, second only to shelter at 19.1%.[10]
- The number of children that walk or bike to school has dropped 37% over the last twenty years.[11] The increase in traffic caused by parents taking their children to and from school and other activities has been estimated to be 20 to 25% of morning traffic. Half of the children hit by cars while walking or bicycling to school were hit by parents of other children.[12] Today only about 8% of children walk to school.

[3] Ibid.
[4] W.C. Wilkinson, et. al. Increasing Physical Activity through Community Design: A Guide for Public Health Practitioners. Washington: National Center for Bicycling and Walking. May 2002.
[5] Brownson, Dr. Ross, et.al. "Environmental and policy determinants of physical activity in the United States", American Journal of Public Health, Dec 2001.
[6] Chicago Department of Transportation
[7] Surface transportation Policy Project, "Mean Streets 2000", 2000.
[8] Michigan Governor's Council on Physical Fitness, Health, and Sports.
[9] Ed Pavelka, "Can Commuting Help You Lose Weight?", League of American Bicyclists, Summer 2002.
[10] Surface Transportation Policy Project, "Driven to Spend", 2000.
[11] W.C. Wilkinson, et. al. Increasing Physical Activity through Community Design: A Guide for Public Health Practitioners. Washington: National Center for Bicycling and Walking. May 2002.
[12] Michigan Governor's Council on Physical Fitness, Health, and Sports.

- The result of automobile emissions on public health is just beginning to be understood. In Atlanta during the 1996 Olympics, there was a 22.5% reduction in automobile use; during the same period of time admissions to hospitals due to asthma decreased by 41.6%.[13]In Michigan, non-motorized trips account for about 7% of all trips, but make up about 12% of all traffic fatalities and severe injuries. Non-motorized modes are not inherently dangerous; communities have been able to significantly increase the non-motorized mode-share while simultaneously decreasing the number of non-motorized crashes. Emerging research is showing the single most important factor for improving bicycle and pedestrian safety is increasing the number of bicyclists and pedestrians.

The Intention of This Plan

The purpose of this plan is to provide a general background on the issues of non-motorized transportation as well as to present a proposal on how to address the issues through policies, programs, and design guidelines for facility improvements. This is not intended to be a replacement for the *AASHTO Guide for the Development of Bicycle Facilities*, *AASHTO Guide for the Planning, Design, and Operation of Pedestrian Facilities, AASHTO Guide for Achieving Flexibility in Highway Design,* USDOT's *Designing Sidewalks and Trails for Access – Part II, Best Practices Design Guide*, *Accessible Public Right-of-Way, Planning and Designing for Alternations,* the *Revised Draft Guidelines for Accessible Public Rights-of-Way*, MUTCD, MMUTCD or any other applicable federal, state, or local guidelines. Rather, it is intended as a synthesis of key aspects of those documents to provide an interpretation on how they may be applied in typical situations in the Greater Mt. Pleasant Area. Given the evolving nature of non-motorized transportation planning, these guidelines should be periodically reevaluated to determine their appropriateness.

The specific facility recommendations within this plan represent a Master Plan level evaluation of the suitability of the proposed facilities for the existing conditions. Prior to proceeding with any of the recommendations in this report though, a more detailed corridor level assessment or traffic study should be done in order to fully investigate the appropriateness of the proposed roadway modifications and/or proposed bicycle or pedestrian facilities.

[13] Friedman, Michael S., et. al. Impact of Changes in Transportation and Commuting Behaviors During the 1996 Summer Olympic Games in Atlanta on Air Quality and Childhood Asthma, Journal of the American Medical association, February 21, 2001.

1.2 Glossary of Terms

Within this document there are a number of terms that may be unfamiliar to many people. The following is a brief glossary of some of the transportation terms that are found in this document:

AASHTO – American Association of State Highway & Transportation Officials.

Bicycle Quality/Level of Service (Bike Q/LOS) – a model for evaluating the perceived safety and comfort of bicycling in a roadway based on conditions within the road (not surrounding land uses) expressed as a letter grade with "A" being best and "F" being worst.

Bicycle Boulevard - a low-volume and low-speed street that has been optimized for bicycle travel through treatments such as traffic calming and traffic reduction; signage and pavement markings; and intersection crossing treatments.

Bike Lane – a portion of the roadway designated for bicycle use. Pavement striping and markings typically accompanied with signage are used to delineate the lane.

Bike Route – a designation that can be applied to any type of bicycle facility. It is intended as an aid to help bicyclists find their way to a destination where the route is not obvious.

Bulb-outs – see Curb Extensions.

Clear Zones – area free of obstructions around roads, Shared-use Paths, and Walkways.

Clearance Interval – the flashing "Don't Walk" or flashing "Red Hand" phase of pedestrian signals. It indicates to pedestrians that they should not begin to cross the street. A correctly timed clearance interval allows a pedestrian who entered the crosswalk during the "Walk" phase to finish crossing the street at an unhurried pace.

Complete Street – streets that are planned, designed, operated and maintained such that all users may safely, comfortably and conveniently move along and across streets throughout a community.

Crossing Islands – a raised median within a roadway typically set between opposing directions of traffic that permits pedestrians to cross the roadway in two stages. A crossing island may be located at signalized intersections or at an unsignalized mid-block crosswalk. These are also known as **Refuge Islands.**

Crosswalk – the area of a roadway that connects sidewalks on either side at an intersection of roads (whether marked or not marked) and other locations distinctly indicated for pedestrian crossings by pavement markings.

Curb Extensions – extending the curb into the roadway in order to minimize pedestrian crossing distance and to improve visibility when on-street parking is present, also known as **Bulb-outs**.

Dispersed Crossing – where pedestrians typically cross the road at numerous points along the roadway, rather than at an officially marked crosswalk.

E-Bike – a bicycle that is propelled by an electric motor and/or peddling.

Fines – finely crushed gravel 3/8" or smaller. The fines may be loosely applied or bound together with a stabilizing agent.

Inside Lane – the travel lane adjacent to the center of the road or the Center Turn Lane.

Ladder Style Crosswalk – a special emphasis crosswalk marking where 1' to 2' wide white pavement markings are placed perpendicular to the direction of a crosswalk to clearly identify the crosswalk.

Lateral Separation – horizontal distance separating one use from another (pedestrians from cars, for example) or motor vehicles from a fixed obstruction such as a tree.

Leading Pedestrian Interval –a traffic signal phasing approach where the pedestrian "Walk" phase precedes the green light going in the same direction by generally 4 to 5 seconds.

Level of Service (LOS) – a measurement of the motor vehicle flow of a roadway expressed by a letter grade with "A" being best or free flowing and "F" being worst or forced flow/heavily congested. Also see Bicycle Level of Service and Pedestrian Level of Service.

Long-term Plan – reflects the vision of the completed non-motorized system. Some improvements may require the reconstruction of existing roadways, the acquisition of new right-of-way, or significant capital investments.

Mid-block Crossings – locations that have been identified based on land uses, bus stop locations and the difficulty of crossing the street as probable candidates for Mid-block Crosswalks. Additional studies will need to be completed for each location to determine the ultimate suitability as a crosswalk location and appropriate solution to address the demand to cross the road.

Mid-block Crosswalk – a crosswalk where motorized vehicles are not controlled by a traffic signal or stop sign. At these locations, pedestrians wait for a gap in traffic to cross the street, motorists are required to yield to a pedestrian who is in the crosswalk (but not if the pedestrian is on the side of the road waiting to cross).

MMUTCD – Michigan Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices. This document is based on the National Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD). It specifics how signs, pavement markings and traffic signals are to be used. The current version is the 2005 MMUTCD. It was adopted on August 15, 2005 and is based on the 2003 National MUTCD. In 2009 a new National MUTCD was adopted, the state has two years to adopt the national manual. Typically, there are only minor divergences between the two manuals due to specifics in Michigan's traffic laws.

Mode-share / Mode split – the percent of trips for a particular mode of transportation relative to all trips. A mode-share / mode split may be for a particular type of trip such as home-to-work.

Mode – distinct types of transportation (cars, bicycles and pedestrians are all different modes of travel).

MVC – Michigan Vehicle Code, a state law addressing the operation of motor vehicles and other modes of transportation.

Near-term Opportunities –improvements that may generally be done with minimal changes to existing roadway infrastructure. They include road re-striping projects, paved shoulders, new sidewalks and crossing islands. In general, existing curbs and drainage structures are not changed.

Neighborhood Connector – a route that primarily utilizes residential streets and short connecting pathways that link destinations such as parks, schools and **Shared Use Paths**. Neighborhood Connectors may contain the characteristics of a **Bicycle Boulevard** but, in addition, provide accommodations for pedestrians.

Out-of-Direction Travel – travel in an out-of-the-way, undesirable direction.

Outside Lane – the travel lane closest to the side of the road.

Off-road Trail – see Shared Use Path

Pedestrian Desire Lines – preferred pedestrian direction of travel.

Pedestrian Hybrid Beacon – also known as a HAWK signal, is a beacon used to help pedestrians cross mid-block by stopping motorized traffic.

Pedestrian Quality/Level of Service (Ped. Q/LOS) – a model for evaluating the perceived safety and comfort of the pedestrian experience based on conditions within the road ROW (not surrounding land uses) expressed as a letter grade with "A" being best and "F" being worst.

Rectangular Rapid Flash Beacons – are high intensity alternating LED flashers that are paired with standard crosswalk signs. The LED flashers are activated when a pedestrian or bicyclists is crossing the road to draw motorists attention to the crosswalk at the time it is being used.

Refuge Islands – see Crossing Islands.

Roundabouts – yield-based circular intersections that permit continuous vehicle travel movement.

Shared Roadway –bicycles and vehicles share the roadway without any portion of the road specifically designated for the bicycle use. Shared Roadways may have certain undesignated accommodations for bicyclists such as wide lanes, paved shoulders, and/or low speeds. These routes may also be signed and include pavement markings such as Shared-Lane Markings.

Shared Lane Markings – a pavement marking consisting of a bike symbol with a double chevron above, also known as "sharrows". These pavement markings are used for on-road bicycle facilities where the right-of-way is too narrow for designated bike lanes. The shared lane markings alerts cars to take caution and allow cyclist to safely travel in these lanes when striping is not possible. They are often used in conjunction with signage.

Shared Use Path – a wide pathway that is separate from a roadway by an open unpaved space or barrier or located completely away from a roadway. A Shared Use Path is shared by bicyclists and pedestrians. There are numerous sub-types of Shared Use Paths including Sidewalk Bikeways that have unique characteristics and issues. An example of a Shared Use Path would be the I-275 Metro Trail.

Shy Distance – the distance that pedestrians, bicyclists and motorists naturally keep between themselves and a vertical obstruction such as a wall or curb.

Sidepath – see **Roadside Pathway**

Roadside Pathway – a specific type of Shared Use Path that parallels a roadway generally within the road right-of-way. This is also known as a **Sidepath**.

Signalized Crosswalk – a crosswalk where motor vehicle and pedestrian movements are controlled by traffic signals. These are most frequently a part of a signalized roadway intersection but a signal may be installed solely to facilitate pedestrian crossings.

Speed Table – raised area across the road with a flat top to slow traffic oftn used in conjunction with a crosswalk.

Splitter Islands – crossing islands leading up to roundabouts that offer a haven for pedestrians and that guide and slow the flow of traffic. They may also be used at intersections in place of a turning lane.

UTC – Uniform Traffic Code, is a set of laws that can be adopted by municipalities to become local law that address the operation of motor vehicles and other modes of transportation. The UTC is a complementary set of laws to the MVC.

Yield Lines – a row of triangle shaped pavement markings placed on a roadway to signal to vehicles the appropriate place to yield right-of-way. This is a new pavement marking that is used in conjunction with the new "Yield to Pedestrians Here" sign in advance of marked crosswalks.