



Public Participation Plan

August 5, 2019

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1.0 Purpose and Background

Walking is a term frequently used throughout this Public Participation Plan. MnDOT defines walking using the same understanding as the NCHPAD’s (National Center on Health, Physical Activity, and Disability) “#HowIWalk” campaign. The campaign defines walking as an inclusive physical activity term that is individualized based on how a person moves.¹ Walking includes the use of assistive devices, such as wheelchairs or walkers.

Minnesota’s commitment to a multimodal transportation system is well-reflected in MnDOT’s Minnesota GO Vision, its Statewide Multimodal Transportation Plan, and Minnesota Walks (a collaborative effort with the Minnesota Department of Health). MnDOT and its selected consultant team will develop a Statewide Pedestrian System Plan (SPSP) that makes Minnesota a better place for people to walk while aligning with existing state transportation policy. The primary consumers of the plan will be MnDOT staff. The SPSP will be developed at a statewide-planning level, though the plan’s recommendations will be targeted locally based on land-use context and engagement results. Engagement work will be critical to understanding the expectations that people in Minnesota have for walking along and across the state trunk highway system.

MnDOT’s Plan Development Guidelines articulate clear expectations for public engagement during statewide planning initiatives. MnDOT’s Public Engagement and Constituent Services team provided input on this plan. The plan meets the requirements of the agency’s Plan Development Guidelines.

Public engagement for the SPSP will be integrated into the project timeline at two critical points in the process. First, information will be gathered from the public to develop an understanding of people’s expectations for facilities and treatments that make it safer, more convenient, and more desirable to walk along and across the trunk highway system. Later on, the project team will return to the public to share the recommendations in the plan and collect feedback on whether or not the proposed recommendations align with the expectations of the public. This feedback loop is critical to ensuring that the SPSP is responsive to the desires of people in Minnesota.

2.0 Goals & Expected Outcomes

The overall goals for public involvement in the Statewide Pedestrian System Plan are to:

- Meet people where they are, rather than ask that they come to MnDOT.
- Connect with Minnesota Walks identified priority populations through targeted engagement activities.
- Use a two-pronged approach with early engagement to understand what people want to see in the plan, then bring proposed plan strategies back to the public in a similar manner.
- Understand people’s expectations for investments in places to walk along and across the trunk highway system.
- Use demonstration projects to allow people to see what potential changes to benefit people walking may look like in their community.
- Offer a variety of platforms to provide input, including online and in-person opportunities.
- Convey complex, technical information using plain language and graphics.

¹ [NCHPAD #HowIWalk campaign website](#)

- Comply with MnDOT guidelines on public engagement activities.

The intended outcome of engagement for the SPSP is that the public, including stakeholder groups like local governments and health improvement organizations have actively participated in the project process and assisted MnDOT in developing the Plan. Additionally, engagement should develop buy-in and ownership of the Plan among agency stakeholders, external transportation partners, and members of the public.

3.0 Audiences

Planning for people walking has a broad and diverse body of stakeholders who will be part of the Statewide Pedestrian System Plan engagement process.

MnDOT

The SPSP is a critical effort towards making it easier for people in Minnesota to walk safely and comfortably to their destinations. In many parts of the state, the trunk highway is either a key connecting route between destinations or a difficult road for people to cross. MnDOT will be responsible for implementing the recommendations of the plan on the trunk highway system and is a key audience both for engagement in developing the plan and for establishing buy-in to ensure the plan is implemented effectively.

Partner Transportation Agencies

People walking do not see changes in roadway jurisdictions as they go from one place to another. They see the quality and safety of the connections that they desire. To this end, it is critical that MnDOT work closely with local transportation partners to ensure that people walking have a high-quality experience regardless of the roadway that they are walking on, along, or across. Partner transportation agencies include counties, cities, Metropolitan Planning Organizations, Regional Development Organizations, Tribal governments, and more. It is critical to gather feedback from these partners as MnDOT seeks to understand expectations for its own system.

Public Health Partners

Public health partners are deserving of dedicated engagement given the long history of coordination between transportation and public health stakeholders in Minnesota. MnDOT and the Minnesota Department of Health worked together closely to develop Minnesota Walks, the guiding vision that laid the groundwork for the SPSP. Locally, public health practitioners are often a driving force in encouraging more people to walk and advocating for improvements that make walking safer and more desirable. Special care will be given to ensure that there are ample and appropriate opportunities for public health partners to engage with the SPSP.

Stakeholders

A stakeholder of the SPSP is defined as a person, group, or organization with a specific interest in the project. Past work related to walking will influence a list of known stakeholders developed early in the planning process.

This will not be considered an exhaustive list, and additional stakeholders could be added based as the project team's awareness grows.

Different stakeholders will have differing levels of interest and energy to commit to the planning process. A variety of different opportunities for engagement will be offered, and stakeholders will be able to select those opportunities that feel most appropriate for their level of interest and availability.

Public

People in Minnesota are the ultimate beneficiaries of the SPSP. It is critical that engagement activities provide varying opportunities for involvement in the SPSP based on a person's interest level. Considerable effort should be made by the project team to limit the amount of energy that an interested person in Minnesota needs to expend to participate in the planning process. Engagement events will include refreshments, children's activities, interpreters (to assist people with limited English), easy access, hearing devices, and other appropriate services as applicable and necessary. All engagement materials will be ADA accessible and plain language. A variety of potential engagement strategies are listed in Section 5.0.

Minnesota Walks identified six groups of people in Minnesota who face greater barriers to safe and desirable walking. These include:

- People of color
- People in small rural communities
- Children and youth
- Native Americans
- People with low incomes living in urban communities
- Older adults
- People with disabilities

The SPSP project team will develop engagement activities that minimize the amount of energy that people who identify with these groups will need to expend to participate in the planning process. Input received from these priority populations will have a significant impact on the recommendations developed as part of the SPSP.

4.0 Project Development Process

Project Management Team

The SPSP's Project Management Team (PMT) is a core group of individuals who will work most closely with plan development activities. Two representatives of MnDOT's Office of Transit and Active Transportation will serve on the PMT along with two representatives from the selected consultant team. The PMT will meet on a weekly basis and are tasked with overseeing all work associated with the plan update and supervising work conducted by the broader project team.

Project Advisory Committee Structure

The Plan will be advised by a Project Advisory Committee (PAC) made up of internal and external stakeholder groups with key roles to play in advancing walking throughout the state. The PAC will serve as a sounding board for plan activities before they are put into practice. PAC membership includes the following organizations:

- Federal Highway Administration
- Greater Minnesota Metropolitan Planning Organization
- Metropolitan Council
- Minnesota Department of Health
- MnDOT ADA Implementation
- MnDOT ADA Policy
- MnDOT Bridge
- MnDOT Complete Streets
- MnDOT Design
- MnDOT District Engineer
- MnDOT District Planning
- MnDOT District Traffic Engineer
- MnDOT Maintenance
- MnDOT Metro District State Aid
- MnDOT Office of Traffic Engineering
- MnDOT Office of Transit and Active Transportation
- MnDOT Pre-Construction Managers Group
- MnDOT Public Engagement and Constituent Services
- MnDOT Safe Routes to School
- MnDOT State Aid
- MnDOT Statewide Investment Planning
- MnDOT Statewide Policy Planning
- MnDOT Transit Planning
- Regional Development Organization

The SPSP PAC will meet no more than once every-other month, typically scheduled around times when a critical deliverable of the plan is ready for review by the PAC.

Project Stages

The SPSP, like other statewide transportation plans in the MnDOT Family of Plans, will include a number of different stages in the planning process. Each stage offers opportunities for the SPSP's audiences to engage with the process. The types of engagement and opportunities available will be determined by the project team to best reflect the feedback being sought and the techniques to be used.

- **Plan Scope Development:** Developing the SPSP scope of work took place over a period of 6-12 months and included considerable engagement with internal and external stakeholders to better understand the needs that the project should meet. The State Non-Motorized Transportation Committee was consulted

as a representative group of people engaged in active transportation discussions from throughout the state of Minnesota. The scope of work was vetted by both the SPSP PAC and MnDOT's Planning Management Group before being released through a request for proposals (RFP).

- **Public Participation Plan:** MnDOT and the Consultant will produce a draft Public Participation Plan (PPP) for review by stakeholders before initiating engagement activities. Feedback from review of the PPP will inform any necessary changes to ensure that the SPSP's engagement efforts meet the expectations of [MnDOT's Plan Development Guidelines](#).
- **Engagement:** The first phase of public engagement for the SPSP will focus on understanding what Minnesotans expect of the places that they walk in terms of safety, infrastructure, and environmental preferences. Questions will be asked about both walking along and across the trunk highway system. Engagement techniques are outlined in section 5.
- **Engagement Summary:** At the conclusion of the first engagement round, the contractor will produce a summary of feedback heard during engagement activities to share with stakeholders, partners, and the public.
- **Draft Documents:** After collecting engagement feedback from the public, the contractor will begin to develop draft deliverables for the SPSP. Continuing engagement, especially with key partners, will continue to occur as drafts are created. All stakeholders will have the opportunity to review and provide comments on the draft information available in the draft SPSP documents. A second phase of public engagement will commence with the release of draft SPSP documents to ensure that partners, stakeholders, and the public see their priorities reflected in the SPSP.
- **Final Document:** Final plan documents will be developed considering engagement heard from the partners, stakeholders, and the public during the second phase of engagement. The final version of the SPSP, as adopted, will reflect the priorities of Minnesotans expressed during review of draft documents. Responses will be developed to all comments received in the previous stage of SPSP development.

5.0 Engagement Techniques

In-Person Engagement

The project team will utilize a number of different in-person engagement opportunities:

Walking Workshops

Walking workshops engage with the public while walking throughout an area and discussing project aspects as well as discussing the walking experience within the existing pedestrian infrastructure. While walking workshops are an effective way to engage people in general, they can be especially effective with older adults, who often have established walking groups through senior centers.

Classroom Activities

Classroom activities are a way to engage children and youth in transportation planning projects. The project team has partnered with schools on several occasions throughout Minnesota to engage students in the planning, design, and construction process, get their input on the project as well as to spark their interest in

careers in the transportation industry. While classroom activities vary by age group and class partnership, some potential activities include pedestrian iSpy, role playing prioritization activities, or streetscape cutouts.

Listening Sessions

Listening sessions are an effective strategy for gathering more detailed information from a small group of people. They also allow people who would be less comfortable or apt at sharing information via a paper or online survey to share with the project team. While listening sessions are beneficial with all stakeholder groups, the project team has found listening sessions to be particularly impactful as we have worked with Native American groups. Listening sessions with Tribal Communities could be coordinated with the work that MnDOT is doing with the Advocacy Council for Tribal Transportation (ACTT) on improving pedestrian safety on tribal lands.

In-person Surveys

Surveys are an important way to gather public input, especially for projects with a large study area. The project team will develop a survey to gather public input on topics such as pedestrian safety issues, preferences and expectations for pedestrian infrastructure, and how pedestrian infrastructure improvements should be prioritized. The survey will be written in plain language, and complementary ADA accessible online and PDF surveys will also be available. In addition to asking those we interact with in person to fill out a survey, extra paper surveys will be available so that those we interact with can share with others.

Safe Routes to School Coordination

Building on the project team's extensive Safe Routes to School work, our team will utilize previously developed relationships to engage students, parents, teachers, and school administrators in the SPSP.

Pop-Up Engagement at Community Gatherings

Engaging people at events is an excellent strategy for interacting with large numbers of people or targeted groups of people, depending on the type and location of community gathering. Potential community gatherings may include concerts, festivals, markets, or celebrations. Those who stop by will be invited to take a survey and participate in a brief activity. Project business cards will also be handed out to encourage continued involvement and online participation.

Demonstration Projects

The project team will plan and implement two walking-focused demonstration projects as part of public engagement. The project team will work with MnDOT staff to identify potential project locations, with the goal of extending engagement in small to medium-size cities through a demonstration project approach. The project team recommends installing projects for one to two days; however, longer installation periods can be considered in collaboration with MnDOT and local partners.

Planning and implementation of two demonstration projects will include the following:

- Selecting project cities and specific project sites
- Visiting each project site for a planning and design workshop (two total workshops: one in each location)
- Developing draft and final designs for project sites in coordination with local and district staff

- Developing outreach and education materials, including demonstration project-specific surveys
- Recommending appropriate demonstration project materials, following materials approved for use in the MnDOT SRTS Demonstration Projects
- Coordinating temporary traffic control and permitting
- Leading installation of two demonstration projects, with support from MnDOT and local staff and volunteers as available
- Writing a brief summary of the outcomes of the demonstration projects

Project Business Cards

The project team will create a project business card that will be distributed at in-person engagement activities. The project business cards show how people can stay engaged with the project. Cards can be distributed through networks to make more people aware of the planning process.

Online Engagement

In order to reach a broader audience than would be possible through solely in-person engagement techniques, the project team will use a variety of online engagement tools:

Online Survey

The project team will develop an online survey in addition to paper surveys that will be available and distributed as in-person engagement activities. The questions will be the same as the paper survey to allow for cross tabulation and will be designed in an interactive and ADA accessible manner.

Social Media Posts and Advertisements, and Surveys

Social media posts, advertisements, and surveys will also be utilized to engage more Minnesotans in the SPSP. The project team will utilize MnDOT's existing social media channels to share about upcoming in-person engagement opportunities as well as promote and advertise the online survey. Social media advertisements will be targeted toward priority populations or demographic groups that are underrepresented in the SPSP planning process. Social media surveys will also be utilized to gain insight from MnDOT's social media network.

Social media is an essential and effective channel for connecting with most of the SPSP's intended audiences organically and through targeted advertising. The social media plan will provide for a social media calendar utilizing necessary messages and graphics with the assistance and approval of MnDOT. All aspects of the campaign will be monitored and include reporting of metrics. The project team will use analytics and split testing to drive engagement. The team will also test images and graphics to discover the most effective content for the project.

Project Emails

The project team will create project emails to send out at key points throughout the project. These will be designed with both MnDOT and project branding and will advertise ways to engage with the project or that

deliverables are available for review. Emails will be sent to MnDOT's contact list, which the public and stakeholders will be able to opt into throughout the project.

Engagement Representation

It is a priority for the project team to connect with the public and stakeholders across Minnesota that are representative of the population of Minnesota as well as MnDOT's priority populations. Therefore, the team will collect optional, anonymous demographic data throughout our engagement efforts to understand who we are hearing from and adjust our engagement methods if there is underrepresentation of people groups in the planning process.

Engagement Deliverables

- Up to four (4) in-person engagement activities in each MnDOT district (split across two rounds of engagement)
- One (1) project website, updated approximately monthly
- One (1) in-person project survey
- 1,000 project business cards
- One (1) online survey
- Eight (8) social media posts/polls; two (2) rounds of advertisements
- Six (6) project email blasts
- Demonstration Project Deliverables
 - Two (2) project planning workshops
 - One (1) draft and one (1) final demonstration project design, per project
 - Demonstration project outreach and education materials
 - Installation of up to two (2) demonstration projects
 - Demonstration project summary

6.0 Public Engagement Schedule

Phase 1 Engagement

Phase 1 of engagement for the SPSP will begin in May 2019 and continue into October of 2019. Proposed engagement techniques by district are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Potential engagement techniques for Phase 1

MnDOT District	Priority Population(s)	Location	Potential Engagement Strategy(ies)
District 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children and youth 	Hibbing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Activity in coordination with Safe Routes to School
District 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> People with low incomes Children and youth 	Duluth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engagement activity with the Damiano Center
District 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Older adults People in small rural communities 	Silver Bay	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Walking group/listening session with North Shore Area Partners
District 1/District 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> People with disabilities People in small rural communities 	International Falls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Listening sessions/activity with Koochiching County Health & Human Services
District 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children and youth People of color Native Americans People in small rural communities 	Cass Lake	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Activity with Cass-Lake Bena Schools
District 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Older adults People in small rural communities People of color Youth and children 	Park Rapids area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Doreset Boardwalk Art Fest (6/22) Akeley Paul Bunyan Days (6/28-6/30) Nevis Music Tuesdays Taste of Dorset (8/4)

MnDOT District	Priority Population(s)	Location	Potential Engagement Strategy(ies)
District 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Native Americans • Children and youth 	Red Lake	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listening session with an activity for children and youth
District 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People of color • People with low incomes • Children and youth 	St. Cloud	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promise Neighborhood of St. Cloud
District 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People with disabilities • Older adults • People in small rural communities 	Aitkin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Walking group/listening session in Aitkin, potentially in coordination with Aitkin County CARE
District 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Native Americans • People with disabilities • Children and youth 	Mille Lacs Reservation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listening session with an activity for children and youth
District 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Native Americans • Children and youth 	White Earth Reservation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listening session with an activity for children and youth
District 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People with low incomes • People of color 	Moorhead	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Farmer’s market (Tuesdays) • RiverArts (6/11,6/25, 7/9, 7/23, or 8/13) • Scandinavian Hjemkomst and Midwest Viking Festival (6/21-6/22)
District 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People with disabilities • People with low incomes • Older adults 	Fergus Falls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • West Otter Tail County Fair (7/17-7/20)

MnDOT District	Priority Population(s)	Location	Potential Engagement Strategy(ies)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People in small rural communities • People of color 		
Metro District	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children and youth • People of color • People with low incomes 	St. Paul	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rondo Days
Metro District	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children and youth • People of color • People with low incomes • Native Americans • People with disabilities 	Minneapolis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open Streets • Listening session with children’s activity with community partner, such as Hope Community
Metro District	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People with disabilities • People with low incomes • Older adults • People of color 	Bloomington	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pop-up at Creekside Community Center
District 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children and youth • People of color 	Willmar	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pop-up at the Community Integration Center
District 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People with disabilities • Native Americans • Older adults 	Redwood Falls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listening session/walking group with Redwood Area Community Center
District 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children and youth • People of color • People with low incomes 	Marshall	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listening session and children’s activity with Karen Organization of Minnesota

MnDOT District	Priority Population(s)	Location	Potential Engagement Strategy(ies)
District 7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People of color • People with low incomes • Older adults • Children and youth • People in small rural communities 	Worthington	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • International Festival (7/11-7/13) • Nobles County Fair (8/7-8/11) • Cruisin Downtown Worthington (8/13) • King Turkey Day (9/13 & 9/14) • Activity with the Southwestern Minnesota Opportunity Council
District 7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children and youth • People of color • People in small rural communities 	Mountain Lake	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 85th Pow Wow (mid-June)
District 7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People of color • Children and youth • People with low incomes 	Mankato	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listening session with children’s activity at Minnesota Council of Churches in Mankato
District 7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Older adults • People with low incomes • People in small rural communities 	Fairmont	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Walking group/listening session with Fairmont Senior Citizens Center
District 8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People of color • Children and youth • Older adults • People with disabilities 	Faribault	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heritage Days (6/12-6/15) • Blue Collar BBQ and Blues Art Fest (8/10-8/11)

MnDOT District	Priority Population(s)	Location	Potential Engagement Strategy(ies)
District 8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People with disabilities • People with low incomes • Older adults 	Albert Lea	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listening session/walking group with Albert Lea’s Senior Citizen Center
District 8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People of color • Children and youth • People with low incomes 	Rochester	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Activity with LINK Services for Youth

The techniques utilized in the first round of engagement will focus on the following questions in regard to trunk highways:

- What is your experience like walking throughout your community?
- Describe the places in your community that you most enjoy walking.
- What challenges do you face when walking in your community?
- What makes you feel unsafe walking in your community?
- What ideas do you have to address those challenges to improve your walking experience?
- What are your expectations for pedestrian infrastructure in your community? (This question will be in coordination with a matrix with land use contexts along one side and types of pedestrian infrastructure along the other side.)

Phase 2 Engagement

Phase 2 of engagement for the SPSP will begin in July of 2020 and continue through the completion of the plan in December 2020. This timeline is subject to change as the plan progresses. Engagement techniques will be selected from a similar list to the activities available in Phase 1:

- Walking Workshops
- Classroom Activities
- Listening Sessions
- Surveys
- Safe Routes to School Coordination
- Pop-up Engagement at Community Gatherings
- Project Business Cards
- Online Surveys
- Social Media Posts, Advertisements, and Surveys
- Project Emails
- Public Hearing

August 2020 Update: As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, under guidance from public health leadership the Statewide Pedestrian System Plan project team adjusted the approach for engagement in Phase 2. All surveying being completed as part of this project in Phase 2 will be completed using online measures. People around Minnesota will be invited to take the online survey through links posted on lawn signs and sidewalk clings placed in communities.

In addition, MnDOT is pursuing demonstration project installations to show temporary installments of the types of improvements being proposed in the Statewide Pedestrian System Plan. The list of communities below are pursuing demonstration projects in 2020:

- District 1: Bigfork
- District 2: Park Rapids
- District 3: Sauk Centre
- District 4: Alexandria
- District 4: Henning
- District 6: Blooming Prairie
- District 7: Windom
- District 8: Madison
- District 8: Marshall

The project team will develop digital content that highlights the changes taking place at each demonstration project location to provide people outside of these communities the chance to see and experience them virtually. This content will be shared through MnDOT social media channels and hosted on the project website.

7.0 Evaluation of Efforts

The project team will collect optional, anonymous demographic data from people who participate in engagement activities. This data will be used to assess who is participating in available engagement opportunities and will allow the project team to adjust its approach if there is underrepresentation of priority populations during the planning process.

Judging the overall effectiveness of the engagement process will occur during the second phase of public engagement when key components in the draft plan are brought back to the public for review. What the project team hears from the public during this phase of engagement will help to assess whether the policies and strategies proposed in the SPSP align with Minnesotans' vision for walking in the State. Changes will be made to the plan at this phase as necessary to ensure the plan aligns with how people in Minnesota want MnDOT to advance walking in the state.

8.0 How to Comment

Comments on the Statewide Pedestrian System Plan's Public Participation Plan may be directed to:

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